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EXAMINER

SHAFFER, ERIC T

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3623

DATE MAILED: 07/14/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

# Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/547,791

Applicant(s)

BECK ET AL.

Examiner

Eric T. Shaffer

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

## Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 12 May 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-28 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-28 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 12 April 2000 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

## Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- \* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

## Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 4.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

### **DETAILED ACTION**

1. This communication is in response to the amendments filed May 12, 2003.

#### ***Summary Of Instant Office Action***

2. Applicant's arguments, filed May 12, 2003, concerning claims 1 – 28 in the Office Action mailed February 7, 2003, have been considered and deemed unpersuasive.
3. None of the claims have been cancelled by the applicant and the applicant has not added any new claims. Claims 1 – 28 are pending and are prosecuted in the response set out below.

#### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101***

4. 35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

5. Claims 15 – 28 are rejected because the method claims of the invention are directed to non-statutory subject matter.

In order for the claimed invention to be statutory subject matter, the claimed invention must fall within the technological arts. In the present case, claims 15 - 28 are directed to methods of forecasting, processing and accessing a database, which does not use or effect technology to perform the claimed method.

The invention as recited in the claims is merely an abstract idea that is not within the technological arts. Mere ideas in the abstract (i.e., abstract idea, law of nature, natural phenomena) that do not apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts fail to promote the

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"progress of science and the useful arts" (i.e., the physical sciences as opposed to social sciences, for example) and therefore are found to be non-statutory subject matter.

For a process claim to pass muster, the recited process must somehow affect, effect, or be effected by technology. For instance, a mere recitation in the preamble (i.e., intended use) or mere implication of employing a machine or article of manufacture to perform some or all of the recited steps does not confer statutory subject matter to an otherwise abstract idea. A mere intended or nominal use of a component, albeit within the technological arts, does not confer statutory subject matter to an otherwise abstract idea if the component does not affect or effect the underlying process. Specifically, claims 15 - 28 do not affect, effect, or are effected by technology, and thus do not recite statutory subject matter.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

7. Claims 1 - 28 are is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over McCabe et al (US 6,453,216) in view of Ton (US 6,397,162).

As per Claims 1, 8, 15 and 22, McCabe teaches a weather and water level based system for forecasting renovation and management of a body of water. Using weather data and vegetation soil moisture data to manage the volume of water used or available in storage for use in the irrigation of agricultural products or vegetation is anticipated by McCabe et al, which

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discloses “if an irrigation system is operated according to the method of the present invention, then the largest possible portion of water needed by the crop of turf will be contributed by natural rainfall and the least irrigation water will be used, consistent with maintaining a proper level of soil moisture for the crop or turf being irrigated” (column 6, lines 48 - 54).

The system and method comprising:

means for accessing a database having stored therein data for analyzing the body of water, wherein said database includes weather history data, weather forecast data and body of water history data; A database of weather history data is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “Table 1 shows the historical average rainfall by month for several major Texas cities” (column 6, lines 54 - 57).

a renovation system to execute a request from a user to analyze the body of water for renovation and management by using said weather history data, said weather forecast data and said body of water history data to determine potential problems for the body of water and potential solutions for said potential problems. Using weather history data and rainfall measurements to determine how much water to use in the irrigation of a field is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “irrigation controllers apply water by controlling the amount of time a station is on in a fixed number of minutes, seconds, or other base time. The amount of water applied is based upon an estimate, a guess, or a previous measurement” (column 13, lines 16 - 18).

McCabe et al however, does not specifically teach terrestrial vegetation history data or terrestrial vegetation forecast data.

Ton teaches a terrestrial vegetation-based device for measuring evapotranspiration and using this measurement to control an irrigation system. Ton also does in fact teach terrestrial vegetation history data and terrestrial vegetation forecast data as a range of past values that are stored in the system database and used as a standard to predict and compare future vegetation measurements against (column 7, lines 39 – 45, “processed parameter of the plant's environment is realized on display 52 by a first displayed area 54 of a first color selected among at least two first colors, wherein each of these first colors represents a range of that parameter of the plant's environment. Similarly, a processed parameter of the plant itself is realized by a second displayed area 56 of a second color selected among at least two second colors, wherein each of these second colors represents a range of that parameter of the plant's itself.”)

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of irrigation systems at the time the invention was made to combine the McCabe irrigation system with the Ton irrigation system in order to develop an irrigation management system that used a wide variety of measures to determine when and how much to water a field of crops. It would be obvious to create this invention because combining vegetation measurement with water level measurement would increase the number of parameters involved in determining when crops should be irrigated and would increase the accuracy of such a device. Increasing the number of methods and factors of measurement would reduce the level of error by presenting more facts to substantiate a conclusion, and would also increase the level of accuracy of the combined device, thereby improving the performance of a water level based and vegetation based irrigation management system.

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8. As per Claims 2, 9, 16 and 23, McCabe discloses a system and method, wherein said database data are either passed in via a front end system, collected by said renovation system, or derived by said renovation system. Database data passed into a database via a front-end system is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “the present invention next uses whatever weather inputs and soil inputs are available to calculate a start time that is proper to allow the irrigation system to deliver the necessary water” (column 6, lines 34 - 37).

9. As per Claims 3, 10, 17 and 24, McCabe discloses a system and method, comprising a front end system to receive a request from a user to analyze the body of water for renovation and management, wherein the front end system is a web server. Sending data messages to remote locations by way of a communications network, one type of such communications networks being a web server, is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “one or more messages are sent via various remote data communication methods to one or more irrigation controllers” (column 10, lines 54 - 56).

10. As per Claims 4, 11, 18 and 25, McCabe discloses a system and method, wherein said renovation system comprises:

processing modules for performing processing functions; Creating software that uses specific data comparison operators to performing a processing function, whereby a function is executed if a given rule is true or false, is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “if the probability of rain is sufficiently high then there is little risk to the plants if the irrigation event is skipped” (column 10, lines 59 – 61), where formal rules that use specific data comparison operators is anticipated by the rule “Delay a full day if the Probability > 90%, reduce irrigation a special fraction when the 60% probability <= 90%” (column 11, lines 2 - 7).

administration modules for performing administration functions; Creating software to perform the administrative function of time scheduling is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses "this method of scheduling can also be combined with end time based scheduling to achieve even greater water savings" (column 12, lines 36 - 38).

background modules for performing background functions required by said processing modules and said administration modules. The background module of a clock is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses "when the controller's clock matches or exceeds the start time, the controller activates appropriate hardware" (column 11, lines 11 - 12).

11. As per Claims 5, 12, 19 and 26, McCabe discloses a system and method, wherein said database includes a list of observable problems and a list of fundamental problems. An observable problem is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses "use of these typical or average crop coefficients to calculate the amount of water to apply to a crop could result in either over or under watering in a real world situation" (column 9, lines 57 - 60), while fundamental problems are anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses "methods to determine the amount of water to apply to a station can suffer from problems when used with newly planted landscapes" (column 13, lines 31 - 34).

12. As per Claims 6, 13, 20 and 27, McCabe discloses a system and method, wherein said processing modules comprise:

an analyzer module to determine the impact said weather history data had on actual observable problems of the body of water; The use of weather inputs to determine the impact on water supply problems is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses "the method of the present invention next uses whatever weather inputs and soil inputs are available to calculate a



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start time that is proper to allow the irrigation system to deliver the necessary water” (column 6, lines 34 - 37).

a diagnosis module to determine actual fundamental problems for the body of water based on said actual observable problems; Use of observable problems to analyze and solve problems related to the actual problems of a water supply is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “irrigation controllers using moisture sensors, evapotranspiration and/or other methods to determine the amount of water to apply to a station” (column 13, lines 31 - 34).

a remedy module to determine the impact said weather forecast data and said terrestrial vegetation history data will have on said actual fundamental problems based on the impact said weather history data and said terrestrial vegetation history data had on said actual observable problems, and then to determine, based on the impact said weather forecast data and said terrestrial vegetation forecast data will have on said actual fundamental problems, one or more solutions for said actual fundamental problems; Using weather and crop/soil data to remedy the observable problem of determining how much water to apply to crops is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “the method of least squares regression analysis, or other effective curve means, is used to determine an actual in situ characteristic curve for the specific crop/soil combination being irrigated. Next this in situ characteristic curve is used to calculate the amount of water required to bring the soil moisture or tension from its measured present value to the desired value for each watering event” (column 9, line 65 – column 10, line 36).

a compliance module to determine compliance for each of said solutions; Using data to initiate action which enables a water application system to comply with a chosen set of irrigation solutions is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “measured rainfall can be used to stop,

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delay, and/or adjust the amount of remaining water to apply to meet the needs of the plants while minimizing the amount of irrigation water used” (column 12, lines 49 - 53).

a cost module to determine for each of said solutions a list of factors that will aid the user in the renovation and management of the body of water. The factors used to manage how large a body of water is needed to maintain crops is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “this method of the invention requires a measurement of water applied, requires measurement of soil tension and/or moisture content and water events must be qualified to remove erroneous values” (column 10, lines 40 - 46).

13. As per Claims 7, 14, 21 and 28, McCabe discloses a system and method, wherein said list of factors include one or more of estimated cost, years to complete, possible funding, and timing of implementation. Timing of implementation as per the fixed time required to apply water is anticipated by McCabe et al, which discloses “controllers apply water by controlling the amount of time a station is on a fixed number of minutes, seconds, or other time base” (column 13, lines 15 - 17).

#### *Response to Amendments*

14. Applicant’s arguments filed May 12, 2003 have been fully considered, but the same are not persuasive.

a) Applicant argues that the McCabe invention does not teach a request from a user and a database that stores weather data for analyzing the body of water and water history data, weather history, weather forecast data and terrestrial vegetation history and forecast data. However, the

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combination of the McCabe and the Ton inventions does in fact teach all aspects of the invention.

b) Applicant argues that the McCabe invention does not teach a database system terrestrial vegetation system for forecasting renovation and management for a body of water. However, McCabe does teach a database that incorporates most of the elements of the invention. Data elements not taught by McCabe are taught by Ton and these data elements are contained in the system that measures vegetation.

c) Applicant argues that the McCabe invention does not teach using terrestrial vegetation history data and forecast data to determine potential problems for the body of water and potential solutions for the problems. However, Ton does in fact teach using terrestrial vegetation history data and forecast data to determine potential problems

In light of the above stated facts, examiner respectfully states that applicant's arguments have been fully considered, deemed unpersuasive, and the rejections under the prior Office Action, mailed February 7, 2003, are maintained.

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*Conclusion*

10. No claims were allowed and all claims were rejected.
11. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Oliver (US 5,870,302) – Evapotranspiration control system

Addink (US 6,298,285) – Irrigation accumulator

Lavoie (US 6,453,215) – Irrigation controller

12. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Eric Shaffer whose telephone number is (703) 305-5283. The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (703) 305-9643.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 305-3900.

Any response to this action should be mailed to:

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks  
Washington D.C. 20231

Or faxed to:

(703) 746-7238 [After Final communications, labeled "Box AF"]

(703) 746-7239 [Official communications]

(703) 706-9124 [Informal/Draft communications, labeled  
"PROPOSED" or "DRAFT"]

Hand delivered responses should be brought to Crystal Park 5, 2121 Crystal Drive, Arlington, VA, 5<sup>th</sup> floor receptionist.

ETS  
July 2, 2003

  
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